



Shinroku Saito

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1919-1994

By Rustum Roy

Dr. Shinroku Saito, chairman of the board, Kanagawa Academy of Science and Technology (KAST), and president of Nishi Tokyo University, died on November 21, 1994, at the age of seventy-five. Shinroku Saito was born March 30, 1919, in Utsunomiya, Tochigi Prefecture, Japan.

Dr. Saito was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Engineering as a foreign associate in 1994 and was deeply affected by this honor from his American colleagues. Already in poor health for nearly a year, he was unable to attend the installation ceremony in October 1994. He arranged, however, for his son, who makes his home in Paris, France, to attend the ceremony and receive the honor in his place. His son then flew to Tokyo and handed over the NAE foreign associate certificate, hardly one month before Dr. Saito died.

Shinroku Saito was educated as an aeronautical engineer graduating from Tohoku University in 1943. Immediately after graduation he was attached to the Central Research Laboratory for Aeronautics for the duration of the war.

In 1945 he moved to the Tokyo Institute of Technology, which was to be his main professional base for the next thirty-five years. He had changed fields to materials engineering in 1945 and became one of Japan's leading engineers in structural ceramics.

He rose through the ranks from 1945 to 1977 as research associate, associate professor, and professor in the Research Laboratory for Engineering Materials of the Tokyo Institute of Technology. In 1977 he was selected as president of the institute.

After mandatory retirement in 1981, Dr. Saito served as president of the Technological University of Nagaoka. In 1989 he was the principal driving force, together with the governor of the prefecture, in establishing the Kanagawa Academy of Science and Technology (KAST) near Yokohama. This unique new style of institution for research and graduate training may prove to be one of Dr. Saito's greatest innovations. It is located in Kanagawa Science Park, possibly the biggest "research park" in the world, enabling KAST to interact with some 100 companies on-site and to do state-of-the-art research at the same time. Finally, he also became president of the Nishi-Tokyo University, part of a most innovative worldwide chain of educational institutions started by his colleague, Dr. Shoichi Okinaga.

Yet Dr. Saito's impact on materials engineering took place mainly in the realm of national research and development policy. He, with two or three other individuals such as Dr. T. Yamauchi, who preceded him in the presidency of Tokyo Institute of Technology, helped put Japan's industry ahead of the world in the field of ceramics.

Dr. Saito served on numerous advisory committees to the government, many more than can be mentioned here. In the Ministry of Education and Culture, he became chairman of the Japan Society for Promotion of Science committee from 1970 to 1982.

He served on four major committees of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry. He was a pioneer in the Fine Ceramics Project in 1979 and was affiliated with it until 1993. He also served on the Key Technology Center, New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization, and Small Business Corporation committees, and was a councillor to the International Superconductivity Technology Center.

In the Science and Technology Agency, he was involved in key committees such as the National Space Development Agency of Japan (1979 to 1994) and the Research Development

Corporation of Japan (1993 to 1994). He chaired the Exploratory Research for Advanced Technology committee as well as the Advisory Committee of the National Institute for Research in Inorganic Materials.

He also served in the Prime Minister's office from 1981 onward on the Council for Science and Technology and Space Activities Commission.

Dr. Saito was a key figure in Japan's rise to the top of the ceramic materials world through the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Ceramic Society of Japan, the Japan Fine Ceramics Association, and Kanagawa Academy of Science and Technology.

Among the honors he received are a dozen of the most significant such in Japan. Internationally, in 1993 he was elected to distinguished life membership in the American Ceramic Society, and as a Chevalier de l'Orde National du Merite of the Republic of France. Dr. Saito was a champion of international collaboration. With his blessing, his colleague Professor S. Somiya established the first U.S.-Japan Cooperative Seminar in Ceramics in 1968. He was given the Pioneering Bridge-Builder Award for such activities by the Pennsylvania State University's Materials Research Laboratory.

Dr. Saito was not a narrow scientist-engineer. He grew up in a strongly religious culture and home and maintained a deep and abiding interest in the interaction of science and technology with society. He wrote widely on various aspects of globalization and "negentropy." I was pleased to attend the Second Yoko Conference on "Creating the Future of Mankind" in 1989 and observe this deeper side of Professor Saito in a gathering of the world's leading theologians and philosophers.

Dr. Saito has set a very high standard for citizen-engineers. His broad involvement not only in research but in engineering, technology, national policy, and even philosophy and religion, is a model for all.